

PART IV

THE PATTERN OF AGRICULTURE

Farms - Number and Size

Farms in Grays Harbor County are of medium and small size. According to the Census of Agriculture, there were 896 farms in the county in 1959. The Census definition of a farm in 1959 was more restrictive than in 1954 and this accounted for part of the reduction in number of farms between the two Census years. In Grays Harbor County, the decrease in farm numbers which resulted from the change in definition from 1954 to 1959 was 225. Census data indicate that a peak number of farms was reached around 1935 when there were 2,070 farms. In 1959, Grays Harbor County ranked twenty-third among the 39 counties in the state in number of farms.

The relative smallness of Grays Harbor County farms in comparison to the state average is largely the result of (1) land purchase methods, (2) types of farming and (3) land values. During early settlement much logged-over land was sold in 10, 20 and 40 acre units to part-time farmers. Since 1940, many farms in shoreline areas have been wholly or partially subdivided for residential use.

Table 9. Farms, Number and Average Size, Land in Farms
Grays Harbor County, 1900-1959

Year	Total Farms in the County	Average size of farms in the County (acres)	Total County Area in Farms (acres)	Percent of County area in Farms
1900	600	142.0	85,214	7.0
1910	742	114.0	84,347	6.9
1920	1,064	89.1	94,767	7.9
1925	1,279	73.7	94,320	7.7
1930	1,151	77.7	89,473	7.5
1940	1,915	64.9	124,209	10.2
1945	1,929	67.6	130,381	10.7
1950	1,435	85.8	123,068	10.2
1954	1,324	89.3	118,217	9.7
1959	896	111.1	99,529	8.2

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

Average farm size decreased as population grew and land prices increased. The popularity of part-time farming among workers in other occupations has resulted in many small-scale operations in poultry, berries, livestock and dairy farm enterprises. Heavy costs involved in clearing stump and forest land have tended to discourage development of large commercial holdings in the area. These and other economic factors have created a pattern in which nearly 50 percent of the farms were less than 50 acres in 1959. About 39 percent of the farms were between 10 to 49 acres. The 1959 Census counted only 22 farms of 500 acres and larger.

Census data show that the number of small farms decreased greatly in Grays Harbor County between 1954 and 1959. Farms above 50 acres also decreased in

numbers but only moderately. Small farms were consolidated into larger, more efficient units or put into nonagricultural uses. Part of the decrease in the number of small farms resulted from the change in the 1959 Census definition of a farm.

Farmland in Grays Harbor County declined after 1945. Farm acreage amounted to 130,381 acres in 1945 compared with 99,529 in 1959. This is indicative of some abandonment for other employment and also a change in the use of some farmland for residential and industrial purposes. In 1959, 8.2 percent of the county area was in farms as compared with the peak Census figure of 10.7 percent in 1945.

Number and Size of Farms
Grays Harbor County, 1954 and 1959

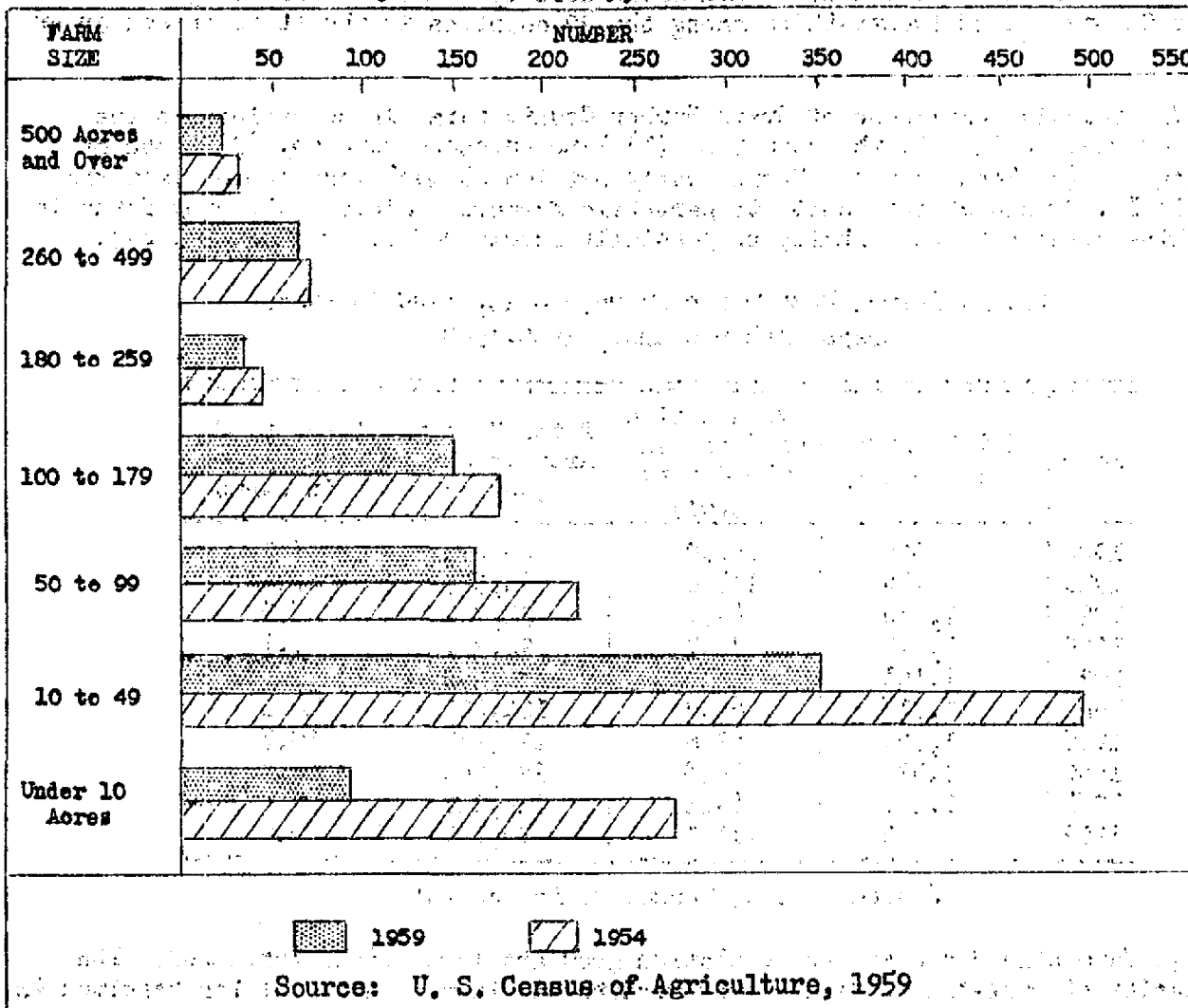


Figure 8. Number and Size of Grays Harbor County Farms, 1954 and 1959

Types of Farms

Grays Harbor County has a variety of farm types, according to the Census of Agriculture. In 1959, the most common type was the dairy farm comprising 15 percent of all Grays Harbor farms. Next in numbers were livestock farms (cattle, calves, hogs, sheep and goats) which added up to 89 units or 9.8 percent of the

total farm figure. Fruit and nut farms (including berries) were third, followed closely by farms specializing in poultry. General farms, defined as growing field seed, hay and/or silage crops or receiving cash income from three or more sources and not meeting the criteria for any other type, numbered 15 or 1.6 percent of the total farm count. Only 5 field crop farms were enumerated during the same year. Over 64 percent of the Grays Harbor farms were classified as miscellaneous by the Census. This category included farms raising nursery and greenhouse products, forest products, mules, horses, colts and ponies. Also included were institutional farms. All types decreased in number between 1954 and 1959 with the exception of livestock and field crop farms. There were 9 more livestock farms enumerated in 1959 than in 1954. Field crop farms numbered only 5 in 1959.

Table 10. Types of Farms, Grays Harbor County, 1959

Type of Farm	Estimated Number of Farms	Percent of all farms in the county	
		1954	1959
Total farms in county	908	100.0	100.0
Field crop farms	5	--	.5
Cash-grain	--	--	--
Other field-crop	5	--	.5
Vegetable farms	--	.4	--
Fruit-and-nut farms	40	3.6	4.4
Poultry farms	35	3.3	3.8
Dairy farms	136	19.4	15.0
Livestock farms other than poultry and dairy	89	5.8	9.8
General farms	15	2.2	1.6
Miscellaneous and unclassified farms	588	65.3	64.8

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

Farm Residence and Operation

Grays Harbor County agriculture is characterized by a large number of operators residing on farms and dividing their work between agriculture and nonfarm work. In 1959, over 61 percent of the farm operators worked off their farms. Almost 50 percent worked off the farms more than 100 days during the year. On an income basis, 66 percent of the operators and their families gained more cash income from off-farm work than they received from farm products marketed from their own places. Most off-farm work was in the forest and fishing industries.

The majority of Grays Harbor County farmers live on the farms they operate. Some 840 farmers reported living on the farms they operated in 1959. Only 33 operators lived in nearby villages and towns.

Farmland Utilization

In 1959, crops were harvested from nearly 19 percent of the land in farms in Grays Harbor County. An additional 14.4 percent was in pastured cropland while 2.4 percent was idle or fallow. Typical of western Washington, over 46 percent of the farmland was in woodland pasture and woodland. Grays Harbor County farms included nearly 46,000 acres of woodland, according to the 1959 Census. Prohibitive costs of clearing Douglas fir cut-over land often resulted in farmers leaving such

acreage in stumps and brush for use as woodland pasture. Other farm acreages with dense, regrowth stands have been left undisturbed for future timber harvest. Other pasture (i.e., other than cropland or woodland pasture) amounted to 9.3 percent of the total county farmland in 1959. The remaining 9 percent of the farmlands were in farm house lots, barn lots, roads, lanes, ditches and wasteland.

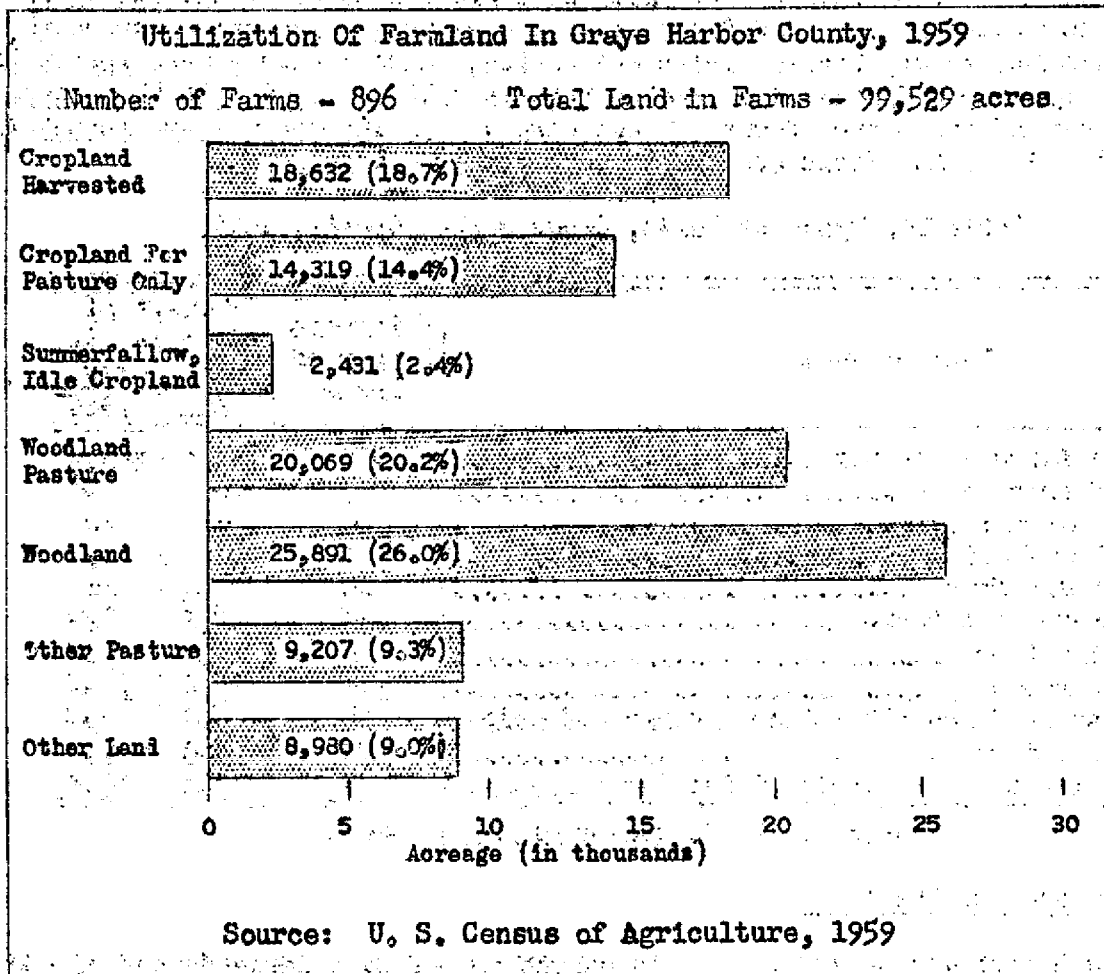


Figure 9. Utilization of Farmland in Grays Harbor County, 1959.

Farm Values

The value of farm lands and buildings in Grays Harbor County has greatly increased since 1920. After reaching a high in 1920, values decreased during the depression years of the late 1930's and early 1940's. Since 1940, however, the total value of farm property in the county has more than doubled. According to Census of Agriculture, the average value of land and buildings per farm increased from a low of \$4,292 in 1940 to \$20,108 in 1959. Value of farmland per acre during the same period rose from \$66.18 to \$200.64. The 1959 total value of farmland and buildings was only \$18,016,768 compared with \$20,994,356 in 1950. This decline was the result of (1) reduction in total acres in farms and (2) decrease in farms due to change in definition by the Census in 1959. Average value of land and buildings per farm increased over 27 percent from \$15,819 in 1954 to \$20,108 in 1959.

Several factors contributed to the rise in farm and land values. One has been the general rise of prices of real estate and standing timber throughout the western United States. Another factor has been the large amount of labor and capital Grays Harbor County farmers have invested in land clearing and general improvements since 1920. A third has been the increase in population and resulting higher demand for rural home and farm acreage related to the industrial and commercial growth of the area.

Table 11. Value of Farm Land and Buildings
Grays Harbor County, 1920-1959

Year	County Average Values		Total Value in County (Dollars)
	Per Farm (Dollars)	Per Acre (Dollars)	
1920	7,603	85.36	8,089,592
1930	7,909	101.75	9,103,259
1940	4,292	66.18	8,219,180
1950	10,610	140.24	15,225,350
1954	15,819	175.93	20,944,356
1959	20,108	200.64	18,016,768

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture

Farm Tenure

A large majority of the farmers in Grays Harbor County own the farm they operate. Many farms have remained in the families of the pioneers who established them originally. Full-owner farms in 1959 constituted 83.8 percent of all county farms and full owners controlled nearly 65 percent of the county's farmland. About 11 percent of the farms were operated by part owners--farmers who own part of their land and rent land from others. Farms operated by part owners accounted for 26.3 percent of the county's farm acreage in 1959. The number of full owner farms has steadily declined since World War II, while part-owner farms increased in numbers until a high was reached in 1954.

Table 12. Farm Operators, Number and Percent of Farms
by Tenure of Operator, Grays Harbor County, 1925-1959

Year	Number of Farms	Full Owners		Part Owners		Managers		Tenants	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1925	1,279	1,093	85.5	45	3.5	--	--	141	11.0
1930	1,151	968	84.1	73	6.3	8	.7	102	8.9
1935	2,070	1,637	79.1	97	4.7	8	.4	328	15.8
1940	1,915	1,575	82.2	104	5.4	3	.2	233	12.2
1945	1,926	1,678	87.1	112	5.8	4	.2	135	7.0
1950	1,428	1,272	89.1	105	7.4	1	.1	57	4.0
1954	1,320	1,144	86.7	124	9.4	4	.3	52	3.9
1959	896	751	83.8	99	11.0	5	.6	41	4.6

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

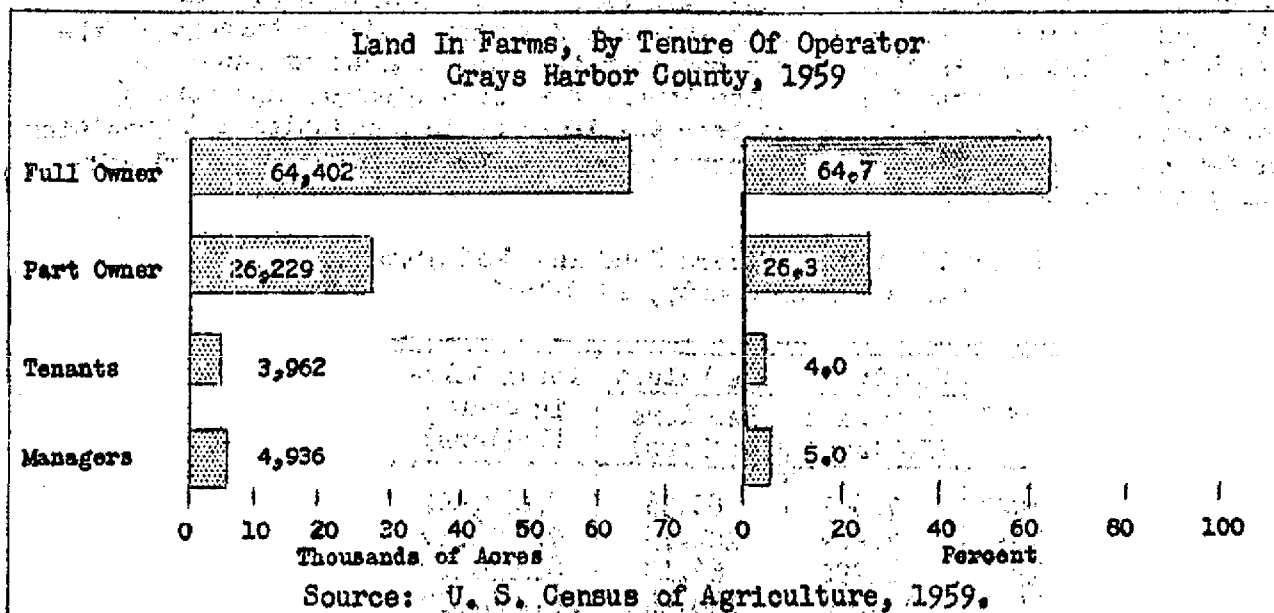


Figure 10. Land in Farms, By Tenure of Operator, Grays Harbor County, 1959.

Tenancy--the renting and leasing of land--is not common in Grays Harbor County. Only 41 farms in the county were operated by tenants in 1959. The percentage of tenant farms has declined over the years since the high of 15.8 percent in 1935. By 1959, the tenant group accounted for only 4.6 percent of all farms in the county and had only 4 percent of the farmland. Manager-operated farms are very unimportant in Grays Harbor County agriculture. In 1959, only 0.6 percent of all farms were operated by individuals who managed land for others and were paid a wage or salary for their services. Managers operated only 5 percent of Grays Harbor County's total farmland during 1959.

Irrigation

The amount of irrigated cropland and pasture in Grays Harbor County has been increasing steadily. Irrigation becomes a valuable asset during dry summer periods. Most of the county's irrigation is accomplished with movable sprinklers with the water originating in wells or surface sources on the farm.

Table 13. Irrigated Farms: Number and Acreage
Grays Harbor County, 1950, 1954 and 1959

Item	1959	1954	1950
Number of irrigated farms	170	147	72
Land irrigated (acres)	4,450	3,261	1,100
Irrigated land in farms according to use:			
Farms irrigating crops	113	94	40
Acres of crops irrigated	2,133	1,296	219
Acres of other land irrigated	2,317	1,965	857

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

Grays Harbor County's irrigated acreage in 1959 amounted to 4,450 acres or about 4.5 percent of the county's total farmland. Approximately 48 percent of the irrigated acreage was in crops, most of which was hay. Lesser acreages of vegetables and berries were also under irrigation. The remaining 52 percent of the total irrigated land in 1959 was composed of irrigated cropland not harvested and irrigated pasture or grazing land.

Farm Facilities

The capacity of farmers to produce is significantly related to the farm equipment and facilities at his disposal. Farms in Grays Harbor County are not heavily mechanized in comparison with those in the more commercial agricultural counties, especially in regards to harvesting equipment. There are many small farms and part-time operations on small acreages in the county which do not require much in machinery or equipment. Many farms raise crops and livestock which require little mechanical assistance. Finally, the use of farm equipment in the area is somewhat limited by irregular and wooded terrain.

The importance of dairying in the county is indicated by the relatively high frequency of milking machines and electric milk coolers. Farms with milking machines numbered 206, while 141 had electric milk coolers in 1959.

Tractors, motor trucks and automobiles are found on majority of Grays Harbor farms. In 1959, about 75 percent of the farms reported 1,093 tractors, of which 100 were of the crawler type. The number of farms with automobiles was 788, which represented nearly 87 percent of the Grays Harbor farms. About 64 percent of the farms also had motor trucks in 1959.

The majority of the county's farms enjoy the convenience of a telephone. Nearly 57 percent of the farms owned a home freezer in 1959.

Table 14. Specified Facilities and Equipment on Farms
Grays Harbor County, 1959

Facility or Equipment Item	Number of Farms Using	Percent of All Farms in County Equipped	
		1959	1954
Telephone	752	82.8	65.7
Home freezer	517	56.9	38.7
Milking machine	206	22.7	20.7
Electric milk cooler ...	141	15.5	--
Crop drier (for grain, forage or other crops)	5	.5	--
Power operated elevator, conveyor or blower ...	180	19.8	--
Grain combines	15	1.6	2.2
Pick-up baler	83	9.1	2.3
Field forage harvester .	98	10.8	4.4
Motor trucks	578	63.6	53.3
Tractors	677	74.6	63.2
Crawler tractors	95	10.5	7.2
Automobiles	788	86.8	79.5

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1959.

Farm Roads

In recent years, much progress has been made in providing all-weather roads for farm families. A large majority of the farms are located in easy access to the main highways in Grays Harbor County. In 1959, nearly 70 percent of the farms were located on hard-surfaced roads. Only 1.6 percent of the farmsteads required traveling on dirt roads in order to reach better roads while the remaining 29 percent of the farms were on improved roads of gravel, shell or shale.